

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method comprising:
using at least one processor to registering a textual identifier with an online service provider to enable instant messaging communications sessions involving the single textual identifier;
maintaining several different manifestations of the single textual identifier to be concurrently projected to other users;
using at least one processor to projecting a first of the manifestations of the single textual identifier to a first of the other users; and
using at least one processor to concurrently projecting a second of the manifestations of the single textual identifier to a second of the other users,
wherein the manifestations comprise at least one of a displayable user icon, avatar, and graphical representation.
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating the first manifestation with a first group of other users so that the first manifestation is projected to members of the first group of other users in a communications session, wherein the first of the other users is included within the first group of other users.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2 further comprising associating the second manifestation with a second group of other users so that the second manifestation is projected to members of the second group of other users in a communications session, wherein the second of the other users is included within the second group of other users.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating a manifestation with the first of the other users and associating a different manifestation with a group of the other users with which the first of the other users is associated, wherein the first manifestation projected to the first of the other users comprises an amalgamation of the manifestation associated with the first of the other users and the different manifestation associated with the group of the other users.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4 wherein the manifestation associated with the first of the other users overrides the different manifestation associated with the group of the other users to the extent a conflict exists.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating a global manifestation with each of the other users and associating a different manifestation with a group of the other users with which the first of the other users is associated, wherein the first manifestation projected to the first of the other users comprises an amalgamation of the global manifestation associated with each of the other users and the different manifestation associated with the group of the other users.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6 wherein the global manifestation associated with each of the other users is overridden by the different manifestation associated with the group of the other users to the extent a conflict exists.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating a global manifestation with each of the other users and associating a different manifestation with the first of the other users, wherein the first manifestation projected to the first of the other users comprises an amalgamation of the global manifestation associated with each of the other users and the different manifestation associated with the first of the other users.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the global manifestation associated with each of the other users is overridden by the different manifestation associated with the first of the other users to the extent a conflict exists.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising associating an individual manifestation with the first of the other users, associating a group manifestation with a group of the other users with which the first of the other users is associated, and associating a global manifestation with each of the other users, wherein the first manifestation projected to the first of the other users comprises an amalgamation of the individual manifestation associated with the first of the other users, the group manifestation associated with the group of the other users, and the global manifestation associated with each of the other users.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10 wherein the individual manifestation associated with the first of the other users overrides the group manifestation associated with the group of the other users and the group manifestation associated with the group of the other users overrides the global manifestation associated with each of the other users, to the extent a conflict exists.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the communications session comprises an instant messaging communications session.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12 wherein the other users are members of a buddy list, the buddy list including the online presence state of the other users.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising selecting among the first and second manifestations for projection to a particular one of the other users based on an attribute of the particular other user.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving from the account a selection of at least the first and second manifestations.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising selecting the first manifestation based upon an attribute of the first other user.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising configuring the manifestation assigned to the first other user to change based upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event is based upon a time of day.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event is based upon a day of the week.

21. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event is based the passage of a pre-determined interval of time.

22. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises a weather condition at a predetermined geographic location.

23. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the pre-determined event comprises communication of a predetermined word.

24. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined emoticon.

25. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined date.

26. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined number of instant messages from the first other user.

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the manifestation assigned to the first other user is configured to change at random among more than one selected manifestation.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the textual identifier comprises a potential instant messaging sender, the first other user comprises a first potential instant messaging recipient, and the first manifestation is rendered to the first potential instant messaging recipient before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the textual identifier comprises a potential instant messaging sender, the first other user comprises a first potential instant messaging recipient, and the first manifestation is rendered to the first potential instant messaging recipient after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

30. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for enabling perception of multiple online manifestations in an instant messaging communications session, the method comprising:

using at least one processor to rendering, on an instant messaging recipient system, an instant messaging application user interface for an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving at least two potential instant messaging recipients and a single potential instant messaging sender;

using at least one processor to registering a textual identifier with the online service provider to represent the single potential communications sender;

receiving a first message that includes a first text message and a first manifestation to be displayed by a first potential instant messaging recipient when perceiving the first message, the first manifestation being selected by an instant messaging sender system from among multiple pre-defined manifestations for the single potential instant messaging sender, each manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items;

rendering the first manifestation at the instant messaging recipient system when rendering a portion of the first message;

receiving a second message that includes a second text message and a second manifestation to be displayed by a second potential instant messaging recipient when perceiving the second message, the second manifestation being selected by the instant messaging sender system from among multiple pre-defined manifestations for the single potential instant messaging sender and being at least partially distinguishable from the first manifestation, each manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items and the textual identifier; and

rendering the second manifestation at the instant messaging recipient system when rendering a portion of the second message.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein the first and second manifestations are rendered before communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein the first and second manifestations are rendered after communications are initiated by the potential instant messaging sender.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30 in which self-expression items comprise one or more of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, and an emoticon, ~~and a sound~~.

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising:
assigning the first manifestation to the first potential instant messaging recipient so that the first manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving the first potential instant messaging recipient; and

assigning the second manifestation to the second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving the second potential instant messaging recipient.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising:
assigning the first manifestation to a first group of potential instant messaging recipients so that the first manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving a member of the first group of potential instant messaging recipients; and

assigning the second manifestation to a second potential instant messaging recipient so that the second manifestation is thereafter automatically invoked and projected, in an online service provider instant messaging communications session involving the second potential instant messaging recipient.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein a manifestation is selected for use in an online service provider instant messaging communications session with a potential instant messaging recipient according to a hierarchy of selection.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein selecting the manifestation according to a hierarchy of selection comprises:
first selecting a manifestation assigned to the potential instant messaging recipient if available;
next selecting a manifestation assigned to a group containing the potential instant messaging recipient, if available; and
next selecting a default manifestation, if available.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein selecting the manifestation according to a hierarchy of selection comprises appending one or more self-expression items of a higher-ranked manifestation to self-expression items of a lower-ranked manifestation.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein selecting the manifestation according to a hierarchy of selection comprises replacing one or more self-expression items of a lower-ranked manifestation with self-expression items of a higher-ranked manifestation.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising locking a manifestation to a potential instant messaging recipient so as to guard against unintended manifestation switching.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising forbidding a manifestation to be assigned to a potential instant messaging recipient so as to guard against unintended manifestation switching.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising changing a manifestation assigned a potential instant messaging recipient while conversing with the potential instant messaging recipient in an instant messaging communications session.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 further comprising receiving a manifestation associated with a potential instant messaging recipient and saving the received manifestation.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein a manifestation is provided by a third party.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein a manifestation assigned to a potential instant messaging recipient is configured to change upon the occurrence of a predetermined event.

47. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises the passage of a pre-determined interval of time.

48. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises the passage of a pre-determined time of day.

49. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises a weather condition at a predetermined geographic location.

50. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the pre-determined event comprises a day of the week.

51. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined word.

52. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined emoticon.

53. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined date.

54. (Original) The method of claim 46 wherein the predetermined event comprises communication of a predetermined number of instant messages from the potential instant messaging recipient.

55. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein a manifestation assigned to a potential instant messaging recipient is configured to change at random among more than one selected manifestations.

56. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for enabling perception of multiple manifestations in a communications session, the method comprising:

using at least one processor to rendering, on a communications recipient system, a communications application user interface for an online service provider communications session involving at least two potential communications recipients and a single potential communications sender;}

using at least one processor to registering a textual identifier with the online service provider to represent the single potential communications sender;

receiving a first message that includes a first text message and a first manifestation to be displayed by a first potential communications recipient when perceiving the first message, the first manifestation being selected by a communications sender system from among multiple pre-defined manifestations for the single potential communications sender, each manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items;

rendering the first manifestation at the communications recipient system when rendering a portion of the first message;

receiving a second message that includes a second text message and a second manifestation to be displayed by a second potential communications recipient when perceiving the second message, the second manifestation being selected by the communications sender system from among multiple pre-defined manifestations for the single potential communications sender and being at least partially distinguishable from the first manifestation, each manifestation comprising a collection of one or more self-expression items and the textual identifier; and

rendering the second manifestation at the communications recipient system when rendering a portion of the second message.

57. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the first manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, and an emoticon, ~~and a sound~~ and the second manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, and an emoticon, ~~and a sound~~.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 30, wherein the first manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, and an emoticon, ~~and a sound~~ and the second manifestation comprises at least one of a buddy icon, a wallpaper, and an emoticon, ~~and a sound~~.